

**Leadership Succession in Schools –
An Approach to Developing a Leadership Philosophy
in Teachers**

**Cheryl Bell
B.A., Dip.Ed.**

**A thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Education**

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

**University of Technology, Sydney
P. O. Box 123
Broadway, NSW 2007**

Australia

April 2012

Certificate of Originality

I, Cheryl Margaret Bell, certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:

Cheryl Bell

Cheryl Margaret Bell

Date: 2/12/12

All research procedures reported in this thesis received the approval of:

- University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee,
UTS Approval: HREC REF No. 2006-175
- NSW Department of Education and Training SERAP Committee,
DET Approval: SERAP 06. 384

Acknowledgments

This thesis is the outcome of a long period of commitment by the author to further academic study. It is the fruition of an area of interest and reflects a belief in the importance of educational leadership in NSW state schools.

As the research is concluded, there are a number of people I wish to thank and to acknowledge their support.

I thank all dedicated teachers and leaders with whom I have worked over the years and the many who have inspired me in some small or significant way in my professional practice.

I thank Professor Alison Lee and Dr Jenny Hammond who conducted the UTS Doctor of Education coursework. You motivated my interest in studying the field of educational leadership and gave me the confidence that I could do the research. I thank my supervisors who have walked the long journey with me. Professor Laurie Brady kept my interest buoyant and encouraged me from the first stage of the journey to the presentation of the research proposal and during the assessment phase. A special mention goes to Professor Sandy Schuck who supervised me for the remaining six years of this journey. I particularly want to thank her for her support during the challenging times. Her gentle nudges, persistence, faith in the nature of my research, and encouragement kept me going and ensured I delivered my best possible effort. I also thank my co-supervisors Dr Alan Scully, and in the latter years Dr John Buchanan. Having another perspective on my work has been very helpful. I wish to thank Dr Guenter Plum, the professional editor, who provided copyediting and proof reading services according to the guidelines laid out in the university endorsed national guidelines, "The Editing of Research Theses by Professional Editors".

I thank the principals of the schools who responded to my request to conduct the research. I particularly thank the teachers, who were willing respondents. You gave up your time for the research and committed to the interviews, trial intervention and completing your learning journals. I am particularly grateful that you were willing to openly share your valuable perceptions and experiences of the strategies undertaken. Although the trial was a busy time for everyone concerned and I only knew you for a short while, your reflections gave me great insights into the leadership process you had undertaken.

On a personal level, I thank my close friends who supported me throughout the long journey and who frequently inquired about the progress of the study. Finally, to my wonderful husband, your support and willingness to give me the headspace and time to complete this work, particularly over the last year, is to be admired.

Table of Contents

Certificate of Originality	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	vii
List of Tables	vii
List of Abbreviations	ix
Abstract	x
Chapter One Introduction	1
1.1 Leadership Succession in Schools	1
1.1.1 What is Leadership?	2
1.1.2 School Improvement	2
1.2 The Role of the School Principal	4
1.2.1 A leadership hierarchy	4
1.2.2 The School Principal's responsibilities	5
1.3 Why Explore Leadership Succession?	6
1.4 The Context of Leadership Development	10
1.4.1 Trends affecting succession planning and capacity building	10
1.4.2 Complexity of the principal's role	11
1.4.3 An ageing leadership group	12
1.4.4 The changing profile of the teaching population	15
1.4.5 The limited interest of experienced teachers in aspiring to formal leadership positions	15
1.5 Current Leadership Training – NSW State School Context	18
1.5.1 Principals and executive	18
1.5.2 Experienced teachers	20
1.6 Purpose of the Study, Research Question and Key Issues	22
1.7 Significance	23
1.8 Conclusion	24
Chapter Two Literature Review – Part 1: Leadership	26
2.1 General Field of Leadership	26
2.1.1. Factors that influence leadership	27
2.1.1.1 Organisational influences on leadership	27
2.1.1.2 Cultural influences on leadership	29
2.1.1.3 Visionary influences on leadership	30
2.1.2 The collective perspective of leadership	31
2.1.3 A distributed leadership approach	33
2.2 Educational Leadership in Schools	35
2.2.1 Leadership, school culture and vision	36
2.2.2 Educational leadership emerging from the school reform movement	38
2.2.2.1 Transactional leadership	38
2.2.2.2 Transformational leadership	40
2.2.2.3 Distributed leadership	42
2.3 Overview of School Leadership Development	46
2.3.1 School principal and executive leadership development	46
2.3.1.1 International perspective	47
2.3.1.2 The NSW perspective	49
2.3.2 Leadership training opportunities for experienced teachers	51
2.3.2.1 Capacity building	51

2.3.2.2 Professional learning	53
2.4 Conclusion	55
Chapter Three Literature Review – Part 2: Adult Learning Theories	58
3.1 Conceptual Framework	59
3.2 Dimensions of Adult Learning	61
3.2.1 Situated Learning Theory	62
3.2.2 Social Learning Theory	65
3.2.2.1 Social interactions	66
3.2.2.2 Social relationships	67
3.2.3 Cognitive development theory	69
3.2.3.1 Cognitive domain	72
3.2.3.2 Conative domain	73
3.2.3.3 Affective domain	77
3.3 Leadership Learning Strategies	80
3.3.1 Experiential learning	81
3.3.1.1 Kolb’s (1984) “experiential learning cycle” theory	81
3.3.1.2 Work-based practices	85
3.3.1.3 Informal conversation	86
3.3.2 Reflective learning	87
3.3.2.1 Argyris and Schön’s “single” and “double loop learning” theories (1974, 1978) and Isaacs’ “triple loop learning” theory (1993)	88
3.3.2.2 Self and group reflection	93
3.3.2.3 Iterative cycles of inquiry and reflection	95
3.4 Peer Coaching	96
3.4.1 Expert/novice model	96
3.4.2 Peer coaching	97
3.4.3 Facilitated Reciprocal Peer Coaching (FRPC)	99
3.5 Conclusion	102
Chapter Four: Methodology	104
4.1 Design Based Research (DBR)	104
4.1.1 Context	105
4.1.2 Characteristics of DBR	106
4.1.3 Strengths	109
4.1.4 Limitations	110
4.2 Rationale for a Design Based Research Approach	112
4.2.1 Rationale for DBR methodology	112
4.2.2 DBR processes	113
4.3 Theoretical Position	115
4.3.1 Three key learning theories	115
4.3.1.1 “Experiential learning cycle” theory	116
4.3.1.2 “Double loop learning” theory	116
4.3.1.3 “Triple loop learning” theory	117
4.4 Research Participants	118
4.4.1 Participant sample	118
4.4.2 Selection process	119
4.4.3 Relationship-building phase	121
4.4.4 Teacher profiles	122
4.4.5 Issues affecting the participant sample	126
4.4.5.1 Selection process	126
4.4.5.2 Maintaining teacher participation	126

4.4.5.3 Participant recognition	127
4.4.5.4 Teacher relief (for small group sessions four and five)	127
4.5 Data Sources.....	127
4.5.1 Interviews	128
4.5.2 Leadership Learning Intervention (LLI)	131
4.5.3 Participants' learning journals.....	132
4.5.4 Researcher's observations	133
4.6 Analysis Processes	134
4.6.1 Specific criteria for analysis.....	134
4.6.1.1 Participants' experiences.....	134
4.6.1.2 Researcher's observations	135
4.6.2 Framing evidence	135
4.6.3 Challenges	136
4.7 Ethical Considerations	137
4.7.1 Informed Consent.....	137
4.7.2 Confidentiality	138
4.7.3 Minimisation of Risk or Harm	138
4.8 Conclusion	139
Chapter Five: The Leadership Learning Intervention (LLI)	141
5.1 Development of the Leadership Learning Intervention	141
5.2 Description of the Leadership Learning Intervention.....	143
5.2.1 Collegial groupings	143
5.2.2 Multiple Methods	145
5.3 The Design Based Research (DBR) approach	152
5.3.1 Phase One: Defining the problem	153
5.3.1.1 Session one.....	154
5.3.1.2 Session two	154
5.3.2 Phase Two: Developing a solution.....	156
5.3.2.1 Session three	157
5.3.3 Phase Three: Iterations (2)	159
5.3.4 Phase Four: Producing the Design Principles	160
5.3.4.1 Session six: Design Principles	160
5.4 Conclusion	162
Chapter Six: Findings.....	163
6.1 Analysis of the data sources	163
6.2 Evolution of the Design Principles.....	164
6.2.1 Learning Team's Feedback Data.....	164
6.2.2 List of Strategies for Trialling.....	166
6.2.3 Interim Evaluations.....	168
6.2.4 Learning Group's Findings.....	169
6.2.5 Producing the Design Principles.....	171
6.3 Findings.....	172
6.3.1 The significance of the principal's role.....	172
6.3.1.1 The principal's leadership style	173
6.3.1.2 The principal's relationship with the teachers.....	174
6.3.2 The engagement of experienced teachers in appropriate strategies that will enhance their leadership learning and development.....	176
6.3.3 The role peers play in leadership learning and development.....	181
6.3.4 The need to cater for an experienced teacher's leadership growth.....	187
6.3.4.1 Preparedness for change.....	188

6.3.4.2 Personal motivation and the achievement of goals.....	195
6.4 Addressing the Leadership Development Challenge.....	205
6.5 Conclusion.....	206
Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusions.....	208
7.1 Key Findings from the literature.....	208
7.2 Key Findings from the study.....	209
7.2.1 The necessity for a deeper understanding of educational leadership in NSW state schools.....	209
7.2.2 The value of practitioner-based research for engaging and motivating experienced teachers in leadership learning and development.....	210
7.2.3 The principal's role in fostering a nurturing environment for leadership learning and development.....	211
7.2.4 Appropriate strategies that enhance leadership learning and development	212
7.2.5 The role peers play in leadership learning and development.....	212
7.2.6 The need to cater for an experience teacher's leadership growth	213
7.3 Limitations.....	215
7.4 Conclusions.....	217
7.5 Major Recommendations for Leadership Development in NSW.....	221
7.5.1 Leadership development opportunities that provide long-term contextual experiences and practitioner-based research processes	222
7.5.2 Tailoring leadership development programs to meet the learning needs of experienced teachers at the different stages of their development	223
7.5.3 Cultivating an ethos of facilitative leadership that supports the development of leadership skills.....	224
7.5.4 Facilitated Reciprocal Peer Coaching (FRPC).....	224
7.5.5 A co-ordinated approach to leadership development and succession planning	225
7.6 Scope and Significance of the Study, and Directions for Further Work.....	226
7.6.1 Scope of the study	227
7.6.2 Significance of the study	227
7.6.3 Directions for further work	229
Appendices	231
Appendix 1.a – UTS/HREC Approval Letter	231
Appendix 1.b – NSW DET/SERAP Approval Letter	232
Appendix 2.a – UTS/NSW DET Letter to Principals and Participant's Information Sheet.....	233
Appendix 2.b – UTS/NSW DET Consent Form.....	237
Appendix 3 – Interview Questions.....	239
Appendix 4 – Reflections Sheet.....	240
Appendix 5 – Ethical Considerations (excerpt from research proposal)	241
Bibliography	243

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 School Hierarchy	4
Figure 1.2a NSW DEC School Executive Age Distributions – five year projection (NSW DET workforce planning, 2005)Assistant Principals, Primary (N=3,660)..	13
Figure 1.2b NSW DEC School Executive Age Distributions-five year projection (NSW DET workforce planning, 2005)–Deputy Principals, Primary (N=343)	13
Figure 1.2c NSW DEC School Executive Age Distributions-five year projection (NSW DET workforce planning, 2005)–Head Teachers, Secondary (N=3,820) ...	13
Figure 1.2d NSW DEC School Executive Age Distributions-five year projection (NSW DET workforce planning, 2005)–Deputy Principals, Secondary (N=605) .	14
Figure 3.1 Three key learning theories	60
Figure 3.2 Kolb’s “experiential learning cycle” theory (1984).....	82
Figure 4.1 Reeves’s Design Research model (Reeves, 2000, 2006).....	114
Figure 5.1 O’Neill and Lamm (2000) two-tiered model of professional development	144
Figure 5.2 Stages of the GROW model	147
Figure 5.3 Leadership Learning Intervention diagram	151
Figure 6.1 Strategies for trialling	166

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Focus of Interview Questions	130
--	-----

List of Abbreviations

DBR	Design Based Research
DBRC	Design Based Research Collective
DP	Design Principles
FRPC	Facilitated Reciprocal Peer Coaching
GROW	Acronym for Goals, Reality, Options, Way forward (also known as Wrap-up)
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
LLI	Leadership Learning Intervention
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NSW	New South Wales
NSW DEC	New South Wales Department of Education and Communities
NSW DET	New South Wales Department of Education and Training
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PLLD	Professional Learning and Leadership Development
PPA	Primary Principals’ Association
SERAP	State Education Research Approvals Process
SLELU	School Leadership and Executive Learning Unit
SPC	Secondary Principals’ Council
SSNP	Smarter Schools National Partnerships

Abstract

Recent trends within the NSW state school context point to possible concerns for succession planning and leadership capacity building in the future. The trends indicate a potential reduction in the number of aspirants for school principals' positions. The study investigates how the inclusion of experienced teachers might expand the target group for leadership succession. The purpose of the study is to address an apparent knowledge gap in leadership learning and development for this group and a lack of preparation of teachers for effective and sustained succession into the principal's role, in often challenging and complex contexts. The study explores the research question: What are the ways in which an intervention can promote leadership learning, development and succession in schools?

The study draws on three key learning theories: Argyris and Schön (1978), Isaacs (1993) and Kolb (1984). These theories underpin ways to achieve effective leadership development through the use of experiential and reflective learning strategies. The literature reviewed suggests that leadership strategies, focused on collaborative work-based practices such as "Facilitated Reciprocal Peer Coaching," leadership projects and informal conversation, together with iterative cycles of inquiry and reflection, promote the capacity building essential for quality leadership development. This study explores whether these leadership strategies motivate experienced teachers to engage in leadership development activities and build their leadership philosophy.

This study is distinctive because it uses elements of Design Based Research (DBR) methodology to collect data on the participants' experiences of a Leadership Learning Intervention (LLI) and the researcher's observations of leadership development. Data were gathered from interviews, the LLI itself, participants' learning journals and the researcher's observations. The LLI focused on collegial groupings of participants working on a range of experiential and reflective learning activities. These collaborative learning processes broadened the participants' understanding of the nature of leadership, fostered their attitudes and beliefs about leadership and developed contextual expertise. As a result of the processes used in the LLI, the participants developed Design Principles for leadership learning and development. The findings, drawn from the Design Principles and the data sources, led to the identification of four major factors for enhancing leadership learning, development and succession with experienced teachers in NSW state schools.

The research is significant because it addresses a gap in knowledge, regarding the impact of learning processes, on the engagement and motivation of experienced teachers in ongoing leadership development. Further, the study provides valuable insights for future leadership development programs that explore ways to support experienced teachers to achieve their goals and develop self-confidence in their abilities.